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ABSTRACT

The Eisenhower Leadership Development Program at Texas A&M University was created to provide students with an academic perspective on the issues facing leaders, particularly in the areas of health policy, economic development, education, and technology and innovation. Based on the work provided by leadership researchers and educato s, the program designers decided that a mainstay of the program was to place students in a work situation where the new paradigm of leadership was experienced. Students from the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Business, Liberal Arts, and Engineering were selected by application to participate in the program. In teams, the students initiated the steps to solve real-time problems. Students met on a regular basis, were supervised by university professors and staff, received intensive instruction, and reported their problem analysis/solutions to the actual community agencies. The benefits and successes of the program were many. Working with multiple colleges within a large university allowed students to experience teaming with others different from themselves. The link with the community agencies was a way to involve colleges, universities, and schools with community development. The model's most significant attribute was the development of an instructional framework that combined learning about leadership with practicing leadership. (Author/YLB)

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ENHANCED LEADERSHIP EDUCATION: INTEGRATING REAL TIME COMMUNITY ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP SKILL TRAINING

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The Eisenhower Leadership Development Program, located at Texas A&M University, was created to provide students with an academic perspective on the issues facing leaders particularly in the areas of health policy, economic development, education, and technology and innovation. Based on the work provided by leadership researchers and educators, it was determined that a mainstay of the program was to place students in a work situation where the new paradigm of leadership was experienced. Students from the colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Business, Liberal Arts, and Engineering were selected by application to participate in the program. The students, in teams, initiated the steps to solve real-time problems. Students met on a regular basis, were supervised by university professors and staff, received intensive instruction, and reported their problem analysis/solutions to the actual community agencies. The benefits and successes of the program are many. Working with multiple colleges within a large university allowed students to experience teaming with others different from themselves. The link with the community agencies was a way to involve colleges, universities, and schools with community development. The model's most significant attribute was the development of an instructional framework that combined learning about leadership with practicing leadership.

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INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Graduates of universities and colleges are leaders of the future. In their careers, communities, and families, they are the innovators, inventors, and entrepreneurs for the next decades. In their future, graduates will deal with insurmountable change, difficult problems, and diverse human interactions. Although higher education was well known for providing technical and liberal education, how could it provide conditions to incubate, nurture, and enhance the skills needed by the future leaders?

One program, located at Texas A&M University, was created to provide students with an academic perspective on the issues facing leaders particularly in the areas of health policy, economic development, education, and technology and innovation. In designing the goals of this particular collegiate leadership program it was critical to vision the leadership arena of the future. Based on the work provided by leadership researchers and educators, it was determined that a mainstay of the program was to place students in a work situation where the new paradigm of leadership was experienced. Incorporating teams into the program became the anchor and students were provided experiences and activities that developed their problem-solving, team-building, and other leadership skills.

This new paradigm, according to Bennis (1994) supported the notion that leaders should "do the right thing,...take risks, and learn from failure" (Bennis, 1994, pg. 72). George Weber, secretary-general of the International Federation of Red Cross, reinforced this new leadership paradigm by describing the attributes of leaders of the future. He wrote that leaders must be "tireless, inventive, observant, risk-taking, and ever-hopeful builder and enabler of ...leadership teams. Well constructed, these teams will both underpin and fill out the attributes that must mark the organization's top leadership, as well as accomplishing the details and drive of the organization's vision, goals, and purposes (Weber, 1996, pg. 309). Other leadership experts have espoused the philosophy that a team-oriented organization provided the structure to solve problems and provide creative productivity. Cohen (1990) suggested that successful teams maximized the strengths of individuals and minimized weaknesses. In the 1990's, clearly, teams were organizational reality. One example, the Microsoft organization, utilized a model where

most of the work was completed in teams. Jeff McHenry, Microsoft Executive Development Director, stated that "teamwork is always critical to success" (McHenry, 1996, p. 6). He concluded that teams needed clear goals and a motivated team leader.

The educational success of teaching leadership was a consideration in creation of this leadership development program. From the outset, active learning techniques were incorporated. Research by Dodson (1995) supported the active learning philosophy as his study revealed that using simulation exercises increased high school leadership students' perceptions of their ability to work with groups. However, Cummins (1995) discovered that leadership attitudes did not change following leadership training of various age groups. His research opened the question whether students' previous leadership attitudes could be changed to an attitude where the new leadership paradigm would prevail. Another factor to question for this leadership program was a concern for a student's learning style. Since a variety of academic majors and both genders participated in the program, a concern about a student's learning style was questioned. However, McNulty (1996) indicated that for students who participated in leadership courses differences in students' learning styles did not affect their response to various leadership simulation activities, video tapes, or discussion. Based on these studies, the program continued to incorporate various instructional methods but remained cautious as to whether the students' attitudes could be changed to the new leadership paradigm.

HISTORY

The Eisenhower Leadership Development Program at Texas A&M University existed in an institutional setting of 43,000 students where approximately 34,000 students were enrolled as undergraduates. Every state in the nation and more than 100 foreign countries were represented in the coeducational student body. The land-grant university housed 10 academic colleges--Agriculture and Life Sciences, Architecture, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Geosciences and Maritime Studies, Liberal Arts, Medicine, Science, and Veterinary Medicine. Texas A&M University was a public institution dedicated to the development and dissemination of knowledge in diversified academic and professional fields. The University was committed to assist students in their search for knowledge, to help them understand themselves and their cultural and physical environments, and to develop in them the wisdom and skills needed to assume responsibility in a democratic society. The University was evolving and expanding its role to meet the changing needs of the state, national and international communities. Therefore, Texas A&M University offered an excellent environment for the Eisenhower Leadership Development Program.

The Eisenhower Leadership Development Program began in January, 1993 as a joint program of the colleges of Business Administration and Liberal Arts and the Center for Public Leadership Studies. In the fall, of 1995 and the spring of 1996, students were added, respectively, from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of

Engineering. Therefore, the program, in 1996 consisted of 80 students representing 4 colleges.

For its first two years, the Program was funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education. The grant program was named for former President Dwight Eisenhower, hence the name for the Texas A&M program. The program was one of only two in the nation that used these grant funds to establish a university-based, academically supported, multi-faceted leadership experience for undergraduate students. Federal funding for the Program ended on January 15, 1996 when the U. S. Department of Education's funding ended. From that point, the Deans of the four participating colleges, the Director of the newly organized George Bush Presidential Library and Bush School, and the Director for the Center for Public leadership Studies provided the financial and staff resources needed to operate the Eisenhower Leadership Development Program.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Eisenhower Leadership Development Program was an enhanced and fast-paced laboratory for undergraduate students to learn and experience how leadership skills were utilized to solve community problems. The program was designed to teach students that leadership skills were valuable in problem solving and decision-making and that leadership concepts were action-steps to consider prior to decision-making. Housed within a university setting, the program provided a safe forum where students practiced their leadership skills, improved their understanding of leadership theory, interacted with a diverse group of individuals, and established a network of leadership cohorts with whom they may interact during their future careers and community-action roles.

A new class began each Fall and Spring semester and was completed by the end of that semester. The program was structured to include gender and ethnic diversity among the student participants. Students from the colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Business, Liberal Arts, and Engineering were selected by application to participate in the program. The students must have had junior classification and a 3.0 Grade Point Average (4.0 scale). The total number of participants was 20 per college for a total of approximately 80 students per semester (application for the program highly exceeds the enrollment limit). An attempt was made to create a group situation that mirrored the community in which students will live.

Students enrolled in their respective college 3 credit academic course. They were expected to attend all classes and other program events. Students were advised to treat the course as a professional commitment -- not merely as a usual course. A collection of selected readings was developed to provide the students with insights into leadership philosophy and related issues. The class meetings were convened once per week for 3 hours. The students were presented a variety of topics. A typical semester outline was as follows.

Class 1	All day retreat	Presentation of problems
Class 2	Leadership Discussion	Dr. Richard Cummins, Department of Agricultural Education
Class 3	Preliminary outlines	Presented by teams
Class 4	Health Care	Simulation
Class 5	Health Care Discussion	Dr. James Rohack, TAMU Health Science Center
Class 6	Education Discussion	Dr. Linda Parrish, President College Station School Board
Class 7	Looking Glass	Simulation
Class 8	Group Dynamics	Dr. Chris Townsend, Department of Agricultural Education
Class 9	Progress Report	Presented by teams
Class 10	Diversity in the Workplace	Dr. Gretcha Flynn, Amoco
Class 11	Supreme Court	Simulation
Class 12	Conflict Resolution	Sue Fiechtner, Center for Executive Development
Class 13/14	Project Results	Presented by teams

The initial meeting of the Eisenhower Leadership Development students was an all-day retreat. At this event, representatives from community groups, state agencies, and other organizations described their programs and introduced the problems they needed solved. These representatives were selected and contacted in advance by the Program faculty and staff. Care was taken to include issues and dilemmas concerning education, economic development, health, and ethics that existed in the local community. Particular attention was given to finding problems that were real and solvable.

A sample of the real-time community dilemmas that were presented at the retreat included these problems:

1. How should scholarships supported by a private foundation be distributed? Should the scholarship awards be increased to provide more support for outstanding students? Or, should the scholarship awards be distributed to a larger number of students at a lower amount? How should need be incorporated into the award criteria? (Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo)

2. How can future business persons, students, and rural and urban citizens be educated to participate in internationally complex and globally oriented industries? How can traditional industry leaders be convinced that their industries exist in a global economy? How can freshman students at universities be educated to think globally? (Texas Department of Agriculture)

3. What is the economic impact of the "Endangered Species Act (ESA)" on a particular county? How does the ESA effect the plants and animals in a county? What are the

costs and benefits of chemical usage or non-usage to local business and citizens? (Texas Department of Agriculture)

4. What is the impact of recycling in a community? How can citizens be persuaded to purchase products created from recycled materials? (Brazos Beautiful Committee)

5. How can the docket of a county court be organized to provide the best operations? (County Judges)

6. How can volunteers of an AIDS community action agency be trained? How can the turnover of volunteers be reduced? How can volunteers be rewarded so they remain with the agency? (Brazos Valley Community Action)

Other dilemmas presented to the students involved the public school system, city juvenile services, county staffing, and a neighborhood revitalization project.

Following the retreat, students prioritized their interests in solving the particular problems. Then the Program faculty and staff created student teams so that each team included representatives from each college and gender and ethnic diversity. The students, in their teams, initiated the steps to solve real-time problems. Students met on a regular basis, were supervised by university professors and staff, received intensive instruction, and reported their problem analysis/solutions to the actual community agencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The success of the Eisenhower Leadership Development Program was evident on numerous levels. The successes were evident from the viewpoint of each student and the community.

The students were the obvious benefactors from the program. During the formal classroom aspect of the program, the students learned about leadership, group dynamics, conflict management, and other leadership skills. They learned team-building and leadership skills. During problem/analysis team activities, they put into practice their leadership skills. They experienced and dealt with conflict found within their diverse teams. The learned how to communicate with community and governmental agents with busy and impossible schedules. The students enrolled in the Eisenhower Leadership Development Program put their leadership skills to action and worked with the community agencies that exist in their future endeavors.

The community has received benefits because the problems analyzed by the student teams were real. The students provided a free consulting service to the community. The community agency received an oral and written presentation describing the problem and recommendations for implementation.

Specifically, the problems solved by the student leaders turned into actions taken by the organizations and agencies. A sample of the results of the Eisenhower Leadership students were:

1. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo was an organization dedicated to the education of youth. Each year the organization provided over 400 scholarships with a value of $3 million. The study completed by the Eisenhower Leadership students addressed how scholarship dollars were distributed and their plan was adopted into the organization's important long term strategic plan.

2. As a medium-sized city, Bryan, Texas faced crucial urban-blight dilemmas. One situation concerned the defacing of buildings in the historic downtown area. Work completed by the Eisenhower Leadership students recommended that murals be painted to reduce graffiti. In 1996 the murals were painted as a result of the student project.

3. Brazos County began a Boot Camp program for junior offenders. However, the successes and problems of the Boot Camp had not been investigated. The Boot Camp system was researched by the Eisenhower Leadership students and a recommendation was made to develop a selection criteria for Boot Camp. As a result of the Eisenhower Leadership students, another project was planned for Fall, 1996 to develop the criteria.

4. Funding cuts in Medicare and Medicaid were evident in rural health care. Specifically, three rural Texas communities of 3500 each had their own hospitals. None of these hospitals were operating at a profitable level. The Eisenhower Leadership students recommended a consolidation of services among the hospitals. Since these rural hospitals were all in the same county and within a 15 miles radius, one hospital could offer cardiac care, another pediatrics, and the other wellness. Following the Eisenhower Leadership students' presentation, the county judge requested the team to present their findings to the hospital administrators in hope for implementation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Eisenhower Leadership Development Program was presented as a model that formal institutions may incorporate into their curriculum. Working with multiple colleges within a large university allowed students to experience teaming with others different from themselves. The link with the community agencies was a way to involve colleges, universities, and schools with community development. The model's most significant attribute was the development of an instructional framework that combined learning about leadership with practicing leadership.

Evaluations were collected from the Eisenhower Leadership students after each semester. Following the Fall, 1995, students reported that they appreciated the issue speakers, completing the projects, and working in teams. They had concerns with the amount of direction they received for completing the research-oriented projects and the time commitment required. Students recommended that lessons on conflict resolution, communication, and leadership be conducted early in the semester to provide a framework for working in teams. Finally, students suggested that a more defined model for the final report be disseminated early in the course.

The criteria for successful future leaders has been discussed at length by leadership educators, scholars, researchers, and practitioners. A common theme seems to indicate that leaders need to take risk, help others adapt to change, and have the ability to unite individuals into productive teams. An experience such as the Eisenhower Leadership Development Program provided a framework where students gained leadership practice. The participants went beyond theory and sharpen their leadership skills during dilemmas and successes experienced in the real-time projects.

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